The eastern frontier of Western Europe: mobility in the buffer zone

Wallace, Claire; Chmouliar, Oxana; Sidorenko, Elena

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Arbeitspapier / working paper

Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien
institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna

Reihe Soziologie / Sociological Series No. 12

The Eastern Frontier of Western Europe: Mobility in the Buffer Zone

Claire Wallace, Oxana Chmouliar and Elena Sidorenko

The Eastern Frontier of Western Europe: Mobility in the Buffer Zone

Claire Wallace, Oxana Chmouliar and Elena Sidorenko

Reihe Soziologie / Sociological Series No. 12

January 1997

Institut für Höhere Studien
Stumpergasse 56, A-1060 Wien
Fax: +43/1/597 06 35

Claire Wallace
Phone: +43/1/599 91-213
e-mail: wallace@ihssv.wsr.ac.at

Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien
Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna

Die **Reihe Soziologie** wird von der Abteilung Soziologie des Instituts für Höhere Studien (IHS) in Wien herausgegeben. Ziel dieser Publikationsreihe ist, abteilungsinterne Arbeitspapiere einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit und Diskussion zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den AutorInnen. Gastbeiträge werden als solche gekennzeichnet.

Abstract

The post-communist countries of Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics have become a buffer zone between East and West. In this article we analyze the way in which this occurs in terms of migration in and out of the region. Our analysis focuses upon the emerging role which this region plays in relation to other parts of Western and Eastern Europe and the way in which economic and political developments there have encouraged particular forms of migration. We attempt to build a picture of some of the different kinds of migration taking place in relation to the social and ethnic characteristics of migrants. The article concludes that these movements are better understood as part of the mobility and circulation of people rather than one-way migration.

Zusammenfassung

Die postkommunistischen Länder Polen, Ungarn und die Republiken Tschechien und Slowakei haben sich zu einer Pufferzone zwischen Ost und West entwickelt. In diesem Artikel analysieren wir dies im Hinblick auf die Migrationsbewegungen in dieser Region. Unsere Analyse konzentriert sich auf das Verhältnis dieser Region zu anderen Teilen West- und Osteuropas; und darauf, welche ökonomischen und politischen Entwicklungen in der Region spezielle Formen von Migration gefördert haben. Wir versuchen, einige der verschiedenen Migrationsformen im Zusammenhang mit den sozialen und ethnischen Merkmalen der Migranten darzustellen. Der Artikel endet mit der Schlußfolgerung, daß die Migrationsbewegungen eher als Teil der Mobilität und Zirkulation der Bevölkerung, denn als "Einbahn-Migration" anzusehen sind.

Contents

The opening of the borders between East and West Europe which followed the demolition of the iron curtain has lead to new forms of mobility and new forms of contact between East and West Europe. The old division of Europe was between East and West. The newly emerging division is between European Union countries on the one hand, and those countries to the East which suffered the most devastation from seventy years of Communism and will take some time to recover. However, in the middle there have emerged a band of countries which we have termed the 'buffer zone' which have become new areas of social, economic and cultural interaction between East and West. These are: Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Hungary. This model is illustrated in the map attached. Although we are not the first to identify this region as a buffer zone, here we offer an analysis of how it works in terms of the movement of people around the region.

There has been an enormous increase in the amoung of travelling taking place in the region sicne the regime changes at the end of the 1980s. Both the pace and form of movement has changed radically. We began by undertaking a study of transit migration in the Czech Republic (see IOM 1994a and Wallace and Palyanitsya 1995) . However, our preliminary study revealed that this was not the only or even the main kind of migration taking place: people we interviewed were moving in a number of different directions and not many wanted to go to the West, or if they wanted to go to the West, wanted only to look. This lead us to take a broader view of the movements taking place and to make some comparisons with other countries in the region. Our study of migrant experiences and motivations lead us to conceive of this movement around the region in terms of mobility rather than migration. The vastly increased rate and speed of travel in the region for a variety of different purposes and in a variety of different directions encouraged us to look at this phenomenon in broader terms and on a more regional basis.

In the first part of this article we analyze this newly emerging buffer zone region and offer some explanation for why it has become a buffer zone in terms of regional development. In the second part of the article we consider some of the different forms of migration which we uncovered and in the third part we speculate about the implications which this has for the social structure of the buffer zone countries. We do not claim that this is an exhaustive analysis. There may be many forms of mobility which we have missed. Rather, the aim is to map out a general overview within which the flows of people can be seen within a social, economic and political context.

The creation of a buffer zone

The crumbling of the Iron Curtain has opened the post-communist countries to new forms of market activity, new patterns of western capitalist investment, new forms of property ownership and new forms of consumer behavior. A major influence for the Central European post-communist countries has been the contiguity of the European community – especially one of its largest and wealthiest members: Germany. The deepening of ties within the community which has occurred simultaneously with the opening of the borders eastwards has created a more

cohesive western block than has hitherto existed. Without the Cold War or the Iron Curtain to define the two halves of Europe, this has been done increasingly on economic and institutional grounds rather than in terms of ideology and military might. The Central European buffer zone used to be the heavily militarized Western frontier of Eastern Europe. Now it is the westernizing fringe of the post-Communist world, most advanced in the development of market economies and democratic institutions and most receptive to western influences (Haerpfer and Zeilhofer 1995).

In understanding how the buffer zone works we consider three factors: the European Union policies, divisions of labour between the buffer zone and western Europe and the institutional and legal context of reforms there.

The influence of the European Union

The creation of the buffer zone is partly the consequence of European Union policies. The EU countries, fearful of massive influx of impoverished Eastern Europeans and keen to ensure social and political stability in the 'new world order' as well as develop new markets for their products, have created a range of associational agreements with the privileged rim countries: Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Hungary. To a lesser extent this has also included Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic States. These countries have enjoyed development aid programmes such as PHARE, TEMPUS and other EU schemes in the early round of reforms (although such programmes were later extended elsewhere). These countries were themselves very keen to join the European Union and have patterned their institutional reforms to harmonise with EU standards and norms. Although there was no 1990s 'Marshall Plan' as many had originally hoped, these buffer zone countries have attracted much more private investment than countries further East and this has been both a cause and a consequence of the political and economic stability in these countries and their succesful transition towards being liberal, market democracies. Alhtough all of these countries first of all experienced a very dramatic economic slump after 1989, this slump has now receded and are now beginning to show some growth. Despite falling incomes and high inflation, new forms of prosperity are palpable and the buffer zone countries are becoming the most prosperous of the post-communist world.

Another notable development is that the borders between these countries and their western neighbors (previously policed by watch towers, dogs and armed guards) has been dismantled and their citizens are allowed to travel freely back and forth over what is now an invisible frontier – sometimes called the 'green line'. The result has been new forms of economic interrelations between East and West Europe, new patterns of consumer behavior and increased mobility. Shopping, tourism and seasonal work help to circulate capital, life-styles, tastes and aspirations as well as people. Westerners can easily visit these lands by road, rail, air or on foot. Buffer zone residents can pass easily in and out of the European Union over the green line. However, people from the former Soviet Union are able to travel only as far as the borders of the buffer

zone and have much more difficulty getting access to Western Europe. Likewise, for Westerners, the countries east of the buffer zone, although no longer forbidden to them, remain difficult and expensive places to visit. This helps to give the buffer zone a unique geo-economic advantage for both short-term visits and for longer term investments.

One aspect of the integration of the buffer zone countries into Western Europe is a range of agreements to regulate migration [(1)] (Niessen 1992, Kussbach 1992). In the past the buffer zone countries did not need migration policies because for forty years any movement, even around the Communist countries, was severely restricted and passing through the Iron Curtain in either direction was an ordeal at the best. Before and during that time, the buffer zone countries tended to be countries of emigration rather than immigration. In the last few years however, the buffer zone countries have had to rapidly develop migration policies in order to respond to the new situation. These policies have tended to be modeled upon visa, work permit and asylum policies adopted in Western Europe and have become more restrictive with every month that passes. How has this happened? The main pressure to do this comes from migration policies inside the European Union itself because having replaced the barbed wire and watch towers with a 'green line', the EU is now concerned to control who crosses that green line. This has a knock-on effect because the European Union countries then have an interest not just in who gets out of the buffer zone, but in who gets in to it. This means that migration into and through the buffer zone also has to be controlled. The countries in Western Europe such as Germany and Austria most threatened by the new migrations from the East have developed their own co-ordinated policies and bi-lateral agreements for the return of illegal 'third country nationals' between states – that is, they prefer to turn back illegal migrants to the last country they crossed legally: in most cases the buffer zone[(2)]. In particular, the movement towards the abolition of the remaining residual border regulations between the 'Schengen' group of countries (which includes Germany, the Benelux countries and France) has made these countries particularly concerned about their outer borders – to a great extent this is the border with the former Iron Curtain. A variety of European Union policies have endeavoured to create political and social stability in the buffer zone, so that freedom of travel will not provoke a vast exodus of people. Migration from these counties is encouraged within controlled parameters. Thus, no visas are necessary for citizens of Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics to visit Western Europe and they can stay for three months as tourists in the EU. The 'threat' of migration is now defined as being from countries outside of this privileged buffer zone of post-communist Central European countries, mainly the ones to the East and South. Consequently, the buffer zone countries are under pressure to control migration in their own territories as these are now also the external borders of the European Union. They also have incentive to do so for their own reasons, since the influx of migrants from the East and South is augmented by those illegal border crossers who are returned from Western Europe. There is a potential migration crisis under these conditions.

The consequence of these developments is to create a 'buffer zone' between East and West Europe. The dismantling of borders to the West has meant the reinforcement of borders to the

East. This separates off those less-privileged countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Moldova and the Caucasian region which now start to form part of a different zone. These latter countries are generally suffering dramatic economic slump rather than economic recovery and political transformation has not necessarily been in the direction of liberal democratic capitalism which we see in the Central European buffer zone. This has implications for economic and social relations between these regions and for the circulation and migration of peoples between them. Such imbalances create new markets and new opportunities for the people of these different regions.

We are therefore defining 'Western Europe' as the region of the EU countries, the 'buffer zone' as being those countries on its eastern rim which have been the objects of integration and stabilization policies by the EU (the new Eastern frontiers), and 'Eastern Europe' as those countries of the former Soviet Union that are beyond this rim. In this article we focus mainly on the countries of Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, although our arguments may well be extended to other 'buffer zone' countries including Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic States. The Baltic States in their new orientation towards Scandinavia have been subject to 'westernization', whilst Bulgaria and Romania have likewise been the objects of study and attempted integration into Europe. However, the 'buffer zone' proper are those countries with a direct border to the heart of the New Europe since they are affected in particular by this proximity. An interesting question arises as to where the buffer zone ends to the south. The war in the former-Yugoslavia, the UN embargo, as well as economic and ethnic tensions there have destroyed its potential as a buffer zone in our terms. However, we might potentially include the relatively peaceful and prosperous state of Slovenia. Since we lack any information about mobility in Slovenia we are not including it in our analysis here.

In describing a 'buffer zone' consisting of four countries, we are claiming that they have a number of features in common with one another. However, there are also internal differences between each of these countries. Whereas Poland and the Czech Republic have been marching ahead on the road to economic reform, Slovakia has lagged behind somewhat and Hungary, after an early head start, has fallen back. In terms of migration policies, each country evolved their own rather than making collective arrangements, but during the period 1991 to 1995 they have all introduced similar policies, albeit with different timings. Many policy developments in the Czech and Slovak Republics were delayed because of the splitting of the former Czechoslovakia into two parts in 1993. There is also important mobility within the buffer zone itself. During the late 1980s, Hungary attracted many migrants from Poland, the former East Germany and the former Czechoslovakia because of the liberalism of its regime and its more advanced market reforms (Fullerton, Sik and Toth 1995). The more recent absence of unemployment in the Czech Republic has drawn migrants from Poland (in fact this continues a pattern established before the regime change) and from Slovakia. The more liberal regulations governing travel in Poland and the large Polish Diaspora all helped to establish Poles as pioneering the small-scale suit case trading which later become much more widespread throughout the region as a way of importing consumer goods. However, these differences are

small when compared to the overall similarity in the course of development after Communism and in terms of their increasing differentiation from the countries further East (Haerpfer and Zeilhofer 1995). Furthermore, even before the advent of Communism these were countries which had enjoyed some measure of market development and in some countries even a short period of democracy. Although they may resist being lumped together as the "Visegrad countries" they nevertheless face common pressures because of their common geographical location and history.

The Emerging European Division of Labour

The construction of a new Europe with new economic relations and new frontiers has implications for the division of labour, employment and capital (Sassen 1988, 1995). Although much of the technology used in many of the former-socialist economies is outdated, these countries can nevertheless produce goods which can undercut Western European ones. The collapse of the common socialist trading relations resulted in the reorientation of the 'buffer zone' countries towards western markets and they have very quickly built up exports in this direction, despite the imposition of various import tariffs by the EU afraid of this competition. The shift in exports and imports from East to West in the buffer zone over the last few years has been quite dramatic. New investments have poured into the buffer zone countries and investors have developed joint ventures in established industries which has meant the opportunity to take advantage of a reservoir of cheap but skilled labour. The main investors in the buffer zone are the western neighbours: Germany and Austria. The patterns of investment seem to have followed the pattern of broad historical links with Austrian firms investing mainly in Hungary and Slovakia, whilst German firms invest in Poland and the Czech Republic. We could therefore argue that some western industries have shifted some of their production eastwards to the buffer zone.

In addition, whole new industries have sprung up in the buffer zone. The chronic underdevelopment of the service sector in the region has meant a general growth in this direction creating new kinds of servicing jobs: restaurants, cafes, computer companies, video distribution companies, tourist services and other such firms have mushroomed. The physical reconstruction of decaying cities suffering 40 years of neglect and with outdated infrastructure is a huge task employing many thousands of workers. In addition the appearance of new buildings in the cities and the countryside, especially private residences, which are obvious everywhere means a great demand for labour and materials in the construction industry. The newly generated wealth among some social groups, particularly the so-called 'nouveaux riches' helps to create still more enterprises to serve them.

Institutional and legal reform

The slow rate of official privatization and the inexperience of many of the regimes in the buffer zone in legislating for a market society means that many businesses started or still operate in

the informal sphere of economic relations rather than formally. With the fall of communism, activities which had previously been illegal – such as trading, currency speculation, starting business ventures and making profits – were no longer so. Indeed these very same activities which had previously been frowned upon, were now encouraged. Street stalls satisfied the demand for groceries and consumer goods which the general stores were unable to fulfill. Many people moved around or found jobs, uninhibited by any regulations, since these had not yet been developed to deal with them. Taxes on goods and incomes were introduced only from 1993 onwards and taxation schemes have yet to be fully implemented. The second economy which had always existed as a necessary adjunct to the socialist economy became now part of the formal capitalist economy as businesses were legalized and underground activities emerge into the open. Yesterday's crook became today's capitalist (Sik 1993). However, many activities remained underground as laws have not yet been enacted to regulate them or where they have been enacted, these fledgling democratic states lack the means to fully implement them. A whole range of activities are therefore neither legal nor illegal. For example lacking the full registration of workers, it was possible for people on the borders to claim social security and to work across the border at the same time; little can be done about it. Whilst legislation is fast being enacted to control such activity, the news of both small scale and large-scale scams is daily currency in the buffer zone.

The underdevelopment of civil society in countries where this was demolished or perverted, means that there are a range of areas where workers and consumers interests are not protected and there is little pressure as yet to create such protection. Employment contracts and work practices which would be illegal in EU countries can be instituted without redress in the private sector. In this way flexible employment practices which are restricted in Germany and Austria due to strong traditions of worker protection and regulation of employment conditions, can be introduced without such hindrance in some of the new enterprises in the buffer zone. The explosion of free market capitalism in a situation where regulations are underdeveloped or do not exist encourages many exploitative employment practices. This makes the buffer zone countries still more attractive for new investors or those wishing to start businesses without too much control.

Furthermore, widespread corruption which was also a legacy of the previous regimes, enables laws to be bent even where they exist and for those who know how to work this system it means that the buffer zone countries can be very favourable and flexible places from which to operate. The imposition of often absurd regulations which were widely manipulated under communism bred a generally skeptical attitude towards state regulation (Wallace 1995, Wedel 1992). However, although petty corruption was widespread previously, inflation has affected these practices too. Monetary rather than other favours are bartered as the 'spirit of free enterprise' inspires low paid public officials as well as private entrepreneurs. Both the rewards and the stakes are higher than previously (Heinrichs 1994). Corruption may be a feature of all regulated economics, but of course corruption, like other costs, is still much cheaper in the buffer zone than in Western Europe!

Much entrepreneurial initiative therefore takes place outside of the formal economy which is unable to respond sufficiently flexibly to the new demands of rapid marketization. It is in this sector that foreigners are often employed.

However, we would not want to exaggerate the corruption and rule bending existing in the buffer zone. These countries have gone much further along the road towards regulating the market than the countries further East or South. The gradual creation of new rules and regulations, partly on account of integration with the EU, means that many activities which were possible over the last five years are now becoming subject to rational legal control. The many de facto ways in which households survived under this and the previous regimes (Rose and Haerpfer 1992) are subject to increasing attempts at regulation and control, at least within the buffer zone. Thus whilst corruption may exist, it exists within a framework of legality and bureaucratic regulation. This is in stark contrast to some other countries East and South of the buffer zone where moral and legal regulation is breaking down, leaving the field open to armed, violent and ruthless criminal gangs – examples would include parts of the former-Yugoslavia, Georgia, Chechenia. The repressive illegitimate state has been replaced by a Hobbesian scenario. This is important because in our interviews, which we describe later, many people were fleeing this pervasive insecurity and fear which made normal social life impossible in the Eastern and Southern post-Communist countries for the peace and personal safety of the buffer zone. Furthermore, life in the buffer zone, where the distribution and supply of goods is more efficient and where rational regulation of services is better developed with some reasonably efficient policing, is far easier and more pleasant than in other former-Communist countries where simple daily life can be an ordeal. The unregulated, buccaneer-style capitalism of the former Soviet Union frightens away many foreign investors.

Thus far we have described the ways in which the buffer zone was created and how it operates. Now we shall turn to the experiences of different migrants within the region based upon interviews collected from migrants themselves. The research began in November 1993 when we undertook a study for the International Organization for Migration about transit migration in the Czech Republic. This was part of a regional research project which included similar studies in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia. The results presented here draw upon all the reports although the direct quotations come from our own 205 interviews collected in the Czech Republic. Since then we have conducted a number of studies of migration in the region and have now been able to extend the project of collecting interviews to Poland, Slovakia and Hungary thanks to sponsorship from the Austrian National Bank. The interviews were collected by students at the Central European University who came from many of the same countries as the migrants. These were collected in a "snowball" methods since many of the migrants were illegal and a systematic sample was impossible. Through these life-history interviews we were able to collect a "bottom up" perspective on migration in the region which gave us some idea of the numbers and kinds of migrants which were there, but also of their different kinds of activity in the buffer zone. The interviews were transcribed in English and analyzed using SPSS and qualitative analysis packages. This information was complemented with the collection of official

statistics from ministries and other sources and by interviews with border police, refugee centres, NGOs and others directly involved with migration in the region.

Forms of Migration in and out of the Buffer Zone

Our research and that of others which has been carried out over the last four years in this region indicate that there are new forms of mobility which take a variety of complex forms and involve ethnic groups in different ways (Carter, French and Salt 1993, Vehaeren 1993). The dreaded invasion of millions of impoverished East Europeans feared by the European Union has so far not happened, and seems unlikely to happen, but other forms of migration have become important. We have divided the migrants according to some more traditional categories – forced migrants and labour migrants for example – but we have also included less common categories such as tourists, small scale traders and adventurers. This was because these were all categories which emerged from the data. However, this is also in many ways an arbitrary typology because a migrant may have a number of different motivations and their experience could span several of these categories.

Forced migration

The moral panic in Western Europe over the influx of refugees and asylum seekers which began already in the 1980s, was much amplified through after the demolition of the iron curtain allowed the possibility for many new victims of oppression and war from all over the world to head for those countries which were thought to offer the most favourable terms. Germany and Sweden became particular targets for this influx, although it also affected other countries in Europe. The outbreak of war in the Balkans and later in other regions of Eastern Europe greatly accelerated this influx with an estimated half a million refugees flocking to Germany alone in 1992. With the increased control over immigration which had taken place since the 1970s in most western countries, seeking asylum became one of the only remaining legitimate migration strategies. However, the tightening of criteria for recognition of refugees along with joint agreements between countries over multiple applications meant that a very small number of these applications are now successful (about 8 per cent of these were successful in Germany in 1994) (Migration News January 1995).

As it became more difficult to apply for asylum in Western Europe, forced migrants started to go to the buffer zone. The absence of very stringent residence rules in the early transitional years and the liberal asylum policy which at first pertained in this region (along with the possibility of crossing the border illegally) made the buffer zone countries targets for forced migrants. In the case of Hungary which received very large numbers of forced migrants, this was on acccount of its geographical proximity and historical ties first with Romania where the first wave of forced migratns came from, and later with the former Yugoslavia, also on its borders. However, the

buffer zone countries have started to develop stricter and swifter criteria for judging asylum seekers as they did not want the burden of supporting large numbers of refugees from elsewhere. Thus only 11 per cent of applications were successful in the Czech Republic in 1994. Although many of these asylum seekers may be de facto 'economic migrants' we will argue in this article that it is difficult in many cases to make the distinction between economic and political migrants. Rather, the outbreak of war and new dimensions to ethnic oppression or the oppression of other social groups such as young male army conscripts or gays and lesbians is a factor encouraging mobility. News about racial attacks on foreigners in countries like Germany can also discourage refugees from going there and deflect them towards what are seen as more friendly countries such as those of the buffer zone (although they are increasingly seen as less friendly places as we shall indicate later).

These kinds of political intolerance or outright armed conflict in Eastern and Southern areas of Europe have resulted in the presence of large numbers of forced migrants, although few of them will be officially defined as refugees or seek asylum (Sipka 1994). Thus, in Poland there were an estimated 50,000 forced migrants in the country for this reason but only 590 registered officially as asylum seekers (IOM 1994b). In the Czech Republic there were 1,211 refugees plus another 2,415 refugees from the former-Yugoslavia (mainly Bosnia) with temporary asylum status in 1994, whereas the real number of unregistered refugees may be nearer one hundred times that amount. In Hungary, which received a staggering 123, 833 forced migrants since 1987, only 3652 were registered as refugees – about 3 per cent (Nagy 1995). Many of these forced migrants are simply awaiting the outcome of developments in their own countries before returning home. In Hungary many of the me would not even move far from the border near their homeland. However they have an undoubted economic impact on their host countries because they are forced to earn a living in some way. Very often these forced migrants are from educated and wealthier social groups and it is these who are least likely to register as asylum seekers, preferring to mobilize their own networks and resources.

The opportunities for making a living in the buffer zone also encouraged some to stay. Migrants from Bosnia or Croatia were in this category during the duration of the Balkan war as were ones from Georgia, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan or Armenia. However, there were also forced migrants from a far wider regions including Kurds and people from Liberia, Somalia and other African countries for whom the buffer zone represented a suitable safe destination or transit point. Armed conflicts can have an indirect effect on a much wider range of people too. For example, many of those from the former Yugoslavia, from all ethnic groups, were not people who had lost their homes in the conflict but were people who wanted to avoid military service. One strategy was to sign on as a student in the buffer zone countries the in order to obtain immunity and to have access to legal residence. Others were from cross-ethnic marriages – a Bosnian Serb married to a Croat for example – for whom life was now impossible in their own country. In other cases people simply wanted to escape the breakdown of every day life which accompanied hostilities. Those from Armenia, for example, explained that although there is no direct war going on there, the blockade of the country by surrounding countries means that there is no

electricity, no production, no normal economic life is possible and even public services have broken down. One man escaped with his family after his son suffered an illness from drinking infected water (the water treatment plants were not functioning owing to lack of electricity). Many from the former Yugoslavia also explained that there was no possibility for them to have a normal life of study or work in their country. From Georgia, even those not living in conflict zones, complained about the general chaos and anarchy along with the lack of heating in winter which encouraged them to migrate:

> Criminals are the main people in the country right now and there is no place for honest people any more. You go out on the street and don't know if you will return dead or alive. You can be killed or at least wounded because someone decided to play with a gun and doesn't know how, or someone just doesn't like you, simply without any reason and decides you should be gone. How can you survive in such circumstances?.... and here in the Czech Republic, first of all, there are no problems with the mafia; no problems with thieves; no problems with the government. You are free to do whatever you want – if it is not crime of course – nobody interferes in your business, or your activity (Male, 29 years old, Georgian).

Other reasons for migration included the lack of any opportunities in the home country, the political instability in the home country and rising criminality not directly associated with war.

Hungary received by far the most asylum seekers and refugees with 123,833 arriving between 1988 and 1993 compared with 3,800 in the Czech Republic, 2,151 in Slovakia and 5,570 in Poland (Nagy 1995). The first wave between 1988 and 1991 came from Romania and the second wave from 1991 onwards from the former Yugoslavia, especially Croatia. As in the other buffer zone countries, only a small fraction were granted refugee status but the rest were somehow absorbed into the developing economy.

The buffer zone countries have therefore taken in significant numbers of forced migrants, which are sometimes perceived by the residents of those countries as a threat to the fragile social and economic infrastructure which is being developed. In fact, however, very few depend upon state support by living in refugee centres and the majority make a living somehow in the community, which means they could also be classified elsewhere in this typology[3]. The numbers taken in by different buffer zone countries varies, although accurate figures are hard to estimate.

Transit migrants

The creation of the Central European buffer zone has created a new phenomenon in migration in the region: transit migration. The opening of borders and liberalization of movement make it possible for people from the war-stricken or less developed regions of the former Communist-block to head for what are perceived as the golden lands of Western Europe. The porous

borders of Eastern Europe have also made more long-range migration possible from Africa or the Middle East and increasingly from mainland China (IOM 1994a,b,c,d). The absence of borders between some countries (for example that between Russia and Ukraine) and the corruption and ambiguity which accompanies the breakdown of centralized control means that those countries make a useful entry point for migrants from other parts of the world. For example a favourite route of entry to the Czech Republic was via Ukraine where people could buy tourist vouchers (previously controlled by Intourist, the official tourist organization but with 'privatization' different tourist agencies simply sold the vouchers for a profit for prices ranging from $10 to $100). This allowed entry to Slovakia for 3 days and from there they could travel through the border into the Czech Republic, which until 1994 was still in the process of construction. Then they could wait for visas or other permission to continue westward or risk walking across the 'green line' through the Bohemian Forest. Poland too is described in one report as an enormous 'waiting room' where migrants can, contact smugglers or obtain information and forged documents(IOM 1994b). The free travel which pertained within former Soviet countries now becomes an asset for those who want to head west.

However, bilateral agreements signed in return for development aid meant that those who were caught illegally crossing this border could be sent back to the last countries which they entered legally – in most cases the buffer zone countries. Thus in 1993 there were 43, 302 illegal border crossings in the Czech Republic, most of them trying to get into Germany and 22,113 people were deported from Germany to the Czech Republic. In Poland there were 13, 599 attempts to cross illegally into Germany (in both countries those caught are estimated to represent only 20 – 30 per cent of the real numbers) and 1,800 were deported from Germany. In Bulgaria 3,000 people are caught trying to cross the border illegally into Greece each year. (IOM 1994c). This has encouraged buffer zone countries in turn to sign bilateral agreements with their eastern neighbours and to strengthening their eastern frontiers – for example there is 5 kilometer barrier between Ukraine and its western neighbours in order to try to control through-traffic. Nevertheless, there were 17,614 illegal border crossings from Ukraine towards the west in 1993 compared with only 78 in 1992 (IOM 1994d). Although many of these returnees are sent directly back home, the buffer zone countries as well as those to the east of the buffer zone often lack the resources to ship deportees home – especially if they come from far afield. Consequently, those stopped at the border and put on a train may simply walk away or get off at the next stop and try again to cross the border again. Many of them simply disappear. The general pattern in each country was for a wave of illegal border crossings to be followed by bilateral agreements on the deportation of illegal migrants which caused the numbers to drop dramatically by something like half. This happened first in Hungary, later in Poland and then in the Czech Republic. It is likely that illegal crossers were deflected from one country to another by the changing legislation.

There are estimated to be about 100,000 transit migrants in Poland and about 140,000 in the Czech Republic (IOM 1994a, 1994b). These are mainly people from the former Yugoslavia, Romanians (mostly Roma), Bulgarians and to a lesser extent people from the former Soviet

Union, Vietnam, China and other countries. This group mostly remain only for a few days in the country which they are crossing on their journey westward to the USA or elsewhere. However, there are a much wider group of people from the other categories listed here who are awaiting developments before they make their next move. They will wait to see what happens in their own countries (if the war ends or the economic situation improves) and whether they can obtain visas to go elsewhere. Some are awaiting the outcome of business ventures which they have begun in the buffer zone.

Ethnic and other oppressed groups

In many countries of the former Eastern block, the rights of ethnic minorities were suppressed or ignored. There is a resurgence of ethnic conflict at present and the new regimes are often no more tolerant of the aspirations of ethnic minorities than were the old regimes. The increasing fragmentation of countries and the resurgence of nationalism has in some cases accentuated the problems of ethnic minorities, in some cases solved them. Many of the migrants coming to the buffer zone countries were from such oppressed minorities. Significant among them were Hungarians in Romania who have suffered a long history of discrimination and many of whom took the opportunity to leave when it was possible and go to Hungary. These were nevertheless a rather relatively high status group in terms of education, economic and cultural skills within Romanian society. Others are Romanies who have suffered discrimination for many centuries in many parts of Europe and have been the victims of considerable persecution in countries such as Romania even though Romania is deemed a 'safe country' by other states under the asylum regulations. Roma could be seen as an ethnic group predisposed to mobility. They are generally the poorest sections of the populations, those most likely to be unemployed, and most likely to be living in sub-standard housing. Their situation has not improved with the change of regimes, and has often in fact deteriorated. For such groups the opportunity to begin a new life in a more prosperous and tolerant environment is an incentive to move. This group made up a large proportion of those trying to cross illegally into Germany and were defined in one report as desperate to get out by any means (IOM 1994b).

Related to this is the return migration of some ethnic groups to their perceived motherlands. In this category could be classed the so-called ethnic Germans, Russians returning to Russia from the newly independent republics, Pontic Greeks to Greece, Crimean Tartars to Crimea and exiled peoples returning from Siberia or Central Asia to every country including Poland, Germany and so on. In many parts of the former Soviet Union this represents a major resettlement.

Another, statistically less significant oppressed minority is that of gay men. Homosexuality was against the law in the former Soviet Union and even now our respondents indicate that gay men are discriminated against and harassed. Prague has traditionally offered a more tolerant environment for these groups and now a new 'gay scene' flourished with many night clubs and

meeting places. Some gay men have migrated to the Czech Republic, particularly to Prague for this reason.

Ecological migration

Many former Eastern block countries have suffered devastating environmental damage on account of the introduction of damaging industries or nuclear fall out. Although the Czech Republic itself includes some of the most polluted parts of Europe, ecological migration to the Czech Republic can nevertheless seem preferable to living in an area despoiled by nuclear damage. The most significant category of people in this respect are the 2,000 ethnic Czechs from the Chernobyl region of the Ukraine who migrated between 1991 and 1993. Having settled there as farmers some one hundred years ago, many of them are still Czech speaking and live in a Czech community. In 1991 the Czech government offered them a place to live in the Czech Republic and all those who could show Czech descent were allowed to move along with their whole families. They were provided with transport, living accommodation and other financial and social help. At first they were under the impression that they were also being offered Czech citizenship, but this was later denied them and they need to apply for this after five years residence, like anyone else. Generally they are settled in small communities outside of Prague and they were keen to come to the Czech Republic because of the better economic conditions there. Czechs from Kazakhstan also followed.

It might by hypothesized that this is a potential source of much wider mobility as the extent of the Chernobyl pollution of Belarus is only now becoming evident and other ecological disaster areas are starting to become better known: the Aral Sea for example or parts of Siberia. The increase in communications and the spread of information about environmental damage could help to encourage migrants from these areas. However, our interviews revealed that the migrants from Chernobyl were less concerned about pollution than they were about enjoying a better life-style in the Czech Republic.

Tourism

One of the major forms of mobility in the region has been for tourism and shopping and this accounts for most of the vast increase in border activity between Western Europe and the buffer zone. In fact this is mainly in the direction from West to East. The differences in prices between the buffer zone and EU countries creates a very favourable opportunity for bargain hunters and a host of small businesses along the border cater for this trade. One village on the western border of Hungary was constructed mainly for this purpose. At Christmas the stores in Prague are full of German shoppers and one newspaper reported that along the Polish border a lucrative trade has developed with Polish shop lifters stealing goods from German stores,

selling them to vendors in Poland who then sell them back to German tourists at a lower price than they would have paid for the commodity in Germany!

The Czech Republic has the most developed tourist industry and Prague has become one of the major tourist destinations in Europe attracting 80 million visitors in 1993. But tourism is a qualitatively different style of travel being more casual than purposeful and based upon pleasure and consumption rather than profit (Urry 1990). There is nevertheless some overlap between this and other forms of migration because many residents from the buffer zone and outside use tourism as a way of engaging in trade or other economic activity.

In addition to westerners coming East, buffer zone residents can now travel freely to Western Europe and the large number of coaches from buffer zone countries can be seen on motorways all over Europe attest to their new found desire to see previously forbidden countries. In a random survey carried out in Hungary in 1993, 29 per cent had visited Austria, 12 per cent had visited Germany, 12 per cent had visited Italy, 3 per cent Greece, 3 per cent France and 21 per cent other countries (Berencsi and Sik 1995).

Tourism however, also creates a demand for goods and services which in turn stimulates new forms of economic activity from both natives and foreigners. The creation of large-scale tourist industries have encouraged this most popular form of mobility and these industries are rapidly developing in the buffer zone where services such as bars and prostitutes cater for the day (or night) tripper [(4)]. These industries create casual and seasonal jobs of the sort often carried out by migrants. In addition many of the previously hidden and decayed towns and regions have undergone rapid improvement to make them holiday destinations whilst some regions – such as the western border zones – which had suffered from depopulation and years of military occupation and can now be marketed as areas of unspoiled natural beauty. In the countries beyond the buffer zone, by contrast, tourism is not developed and many of the services are missing.

The creation of more consumer-oriented styles of life and consumer culture in the buffer zone region creates homologies between this and the European Union countries as travellers pass on their tastes and customs and also help to create a more culturally integrated region. For the travellers from further East, the buffer zone becomes the place in which to acquire western consumer goods and life-styles. Many of the hair-shampoos, cosmetics and clothes for sale in Ukraine, for example were brought back by traders from Poland[(5)].

This form of travel can create better understanding and integration between the citizens of the buffer zone and Western Europe, but it also creates certain tensions. For example, recent shootings of German tourists by Czech traffic police prompted a flurry of letters and press articles on both sides of the border complaining about the cultural behaviour and habits of the people of each country.

Returning emigres

The liberalization of the former-Communist countries allows the return of political exiles who were previously the most significant source of East-West migration. People who were forced to leave their homelands can now return and in some countries, such as the Czech Republic, this is further encouraged by property restitution. Such people bring with them business skills and investment, but the numbers actually settling in their home countries is not significant. In most cases they have become accustomed to living standards in the West and have raised families there which would make it difficult for them to uproot permanently.

However, their symbolic or political significance can be much larger than their numbers, especially since like the Kinskys, the Schwarzenbergs and the Lubkowiczs they can be important aristocrats or in other cases have significant international reputations of various kinds, such as George Soros or Jan Kavan. Some émigrés have even started political parties with little other program than their own success abroad as was the case with Tyminski in Poland or Ganchev in Bulgaria.

Labour migrants

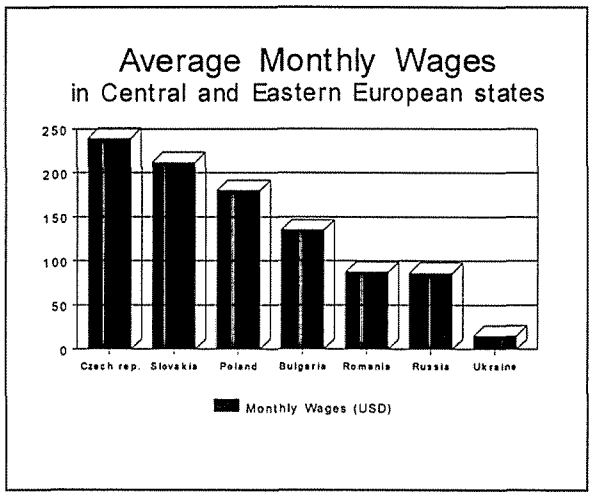
Labour migrants travel from the buffer zone to Western Europe where wages are much higher (even if they are paid less than the citizens of EU countries) and from Eastern Europe to the buffer zone. Some also travel from Western Europe to the buffer zone. The strikingly different levels of income and economic development left by the Communist system as compared with the EU countries encourages this form of mobility. This is even more the case because some of the wealthiest countries of Western Europe lie along the buffer zone border, so contrasts are very stark. Although wages in the buffer zone are approximately only one tenth of those of the neighbouring countries to the West, prices are about half, creating incentives to work across the border. In addition the ratio 1:10 is also the approximate difference between wages in the buffer zone countries and those to the East. Labour migrants are therefore pulled westwards. Labour migrants come either on long term or short term contracts often on an organized basis but sometimes individually. The developing prosperity in the buffer zone countries creates opportunities for contract workers of all kinds. Migrants in the other categories listed here also work in the buffer zone countries and therefore become labour migrants.

The tradition of labour migration migration to Germany , Austria and Switzerland in particular but has drawn in workers from the Mediterranean region on a 'guest worker' basis. However, these have more recently been replaced by guest workers from former-Communist countries, especially the buffer zone. The scale of this activity and the difficulty of controlling it has encouraged the regularization of such work through contracts and quotas (Fischer 1994). This means that some half a million workers commute daily across the borders of the Central European buffer zone to work in EU Europe (mainly in Germany). Some workers are

commuters, some on short-term seasonal contracts and some are longer term migrants (Horakova 1993). Temporary or illegal workers are to be found in many different countries. Citizens from the Central European buffer zone are easily able to travel to the west as tourists and to work casually in EU countries and this is becoming an established pattern for young people and students (Roberts, Jung et al. 1995). In a survey carried out in Hungary in 1993, 10 per cent of respondents had worked in Austria, 27 per cent in Germany and 32 per cent in other countries (Berencsi and Sik 1995).

However, a less recognized new phenomenon is the creation of guestworkers within the Central European buffer zone. The buffer zone countries have considerably more prosperous and expanding economies than the zone further East. The Czech Republic and Poland after suffering some years of fall in output and GDP are now seeing growth for the first time. Table 1 shows the considerably higher wages available in the buffer zone countries compared with Eastern neighbours (although still substantially below that of EU countries). Thus, the average wages in Ukraine were about $10 – $15 per month at the time that they were about $200 in the Czech Republic.

Chart 1: **Relative Wage levels**



Source: Business Central Europe; March 1994; p.73.

The buffer zone countries have all experienced rising unemployment in recent years connected with privatization and the reduction in output which they have suffered (all except the Czech Republic where unemployment is only 3.5 per cent). However, high unemployment can co-exist with a labour demand because of the changing structure of the post-communist labour market. The main reductions in employment have been in the heavy industrial sectors and in parts of the bureaucracy. At the same time there has been a rising demand for labour in the service industries as the boom in tourism creates a need for waiters, cooks, cleaners, shop assistants and others. The building boom encouraged by new forms of economic growth likewise demands workers. Those who are unemployed do not necessarily live in the regions where jobs are being created and are not necessarily in the right social groups to access these new jobs.

Many of the new jobs differ from the old jobs in being in the flexible secondary labour market sector or characterized by high turnover, seasonal employment, short term contract work, insecure work, work at unsociable hours or low paid work. The creation of social security since 1990 and incentives for self-employment for unemployed people introduced in the buffer zone countries through new social security legislation gives residents less reasons to take any job they can find. Furthermore housing regulations and family commitments necessary for survival in a situation of rapidly rising prices but very low wages creates disincentives to move. However, these are all jobs which can and are filled by more mobile populations of immigrants who are not so tied by housing and family to any one place.

We have already described the 'pendulum' and contract workers who work – either illegally or legally – in European Union countries across the border, commuting from buffer zone countries. Workers from Eastern Europe meanwhile work in the buffer zone countries. In Poland these are mainly from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, whilst in the Czech Republic they are from Ukraine, and to a less extent Russia and Slovakia. In Hungary they are from Romania and Ukraine. Hidden unemployment in the former Soviet Union mean that many workers are still technically 'employed' although they have not been paid for some months. They are therefore keen to work for wages in the buffer zone countries where there is a labour demand. It is possible that these workers fill precisely the casual jobs in the labour market that Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish workers are undertaking further west since they work largely in construction, catering and agriculture. There is therefore a 'domino effect' in employment mobility.

Whilst in their first few years of transition it was relatively easy to get residence in the buffer zone countries and to find a job since regulations were not developed, over the last year it has become increasingly more difficult. Fear of an inundation by foreigners, plus pressure from European Union countries, have encouraged the development of far more stringent regulations over work permits. In the Czech Republic it takes a considerable time to obtain a work permit and the applicant must prove that a native person cannot do the job. Often by the time a work permit is acquired the three-months contract of the labour migrant is already expired. This has in turn encouraged the illegalization of many areas of employment since foreigners must still find work. However, the fact that a foreigner must register in the buffer zone countries for a work permit rather than applying for it before they arrive means that many work illegally whilst they are waiting for legal permission. Nevertheless, penalties against employing illegal foreign workers have become more stringent: in Poland and the Czech Republic fines of $2,000 have been introduced over the last few months. In Hungary some 5,000 fines were imposed for this reason in 1993.

Nobody knows how large the illegal labour market might be, but in Poland there are estimated to be at least 150,000 illegal workers and 15,000 with work permits in 1994 (Migration News January 1995) We might estimate that there are even more in the Czech Republic because there were 28,000 work permits issued in 1993 and there is more of a demand for labour in that country. If the ratio of legal to illegal workers is the same in the Czech Republic as in Poland, we

might expect something like 300,000 of them to be present. However, the usual estimates, including those from the relevant ministries, is for there to be roughly the same number of illegal workers as legal ones. This latter estimate is probably rather on the conservative side. Some respondents in our survey were registered for a business or as a student in order to have a legal status but in fact did some other work altogether, so the official statisitics do not necessarily record what people are actually doing.

Some labour migrants are traveling from West to East rather than East to West and are very well off. One feature of western capitalist penetration has been that a group of highly paid professionals arrive with international companies and organizations on a contract basis to work in the buffer zone and countries further East (Salt 1992). The buffer zone becomes a region from which to launch further initiatives in the Eastern European region and since the countries in this area have enjoyed much more investment from western companies they also have a larger share of the international corporate executives and professionals.

Another aspect of the West-East migration flow is that of adventurist migration, especially by young people. West-East migration is that of colonies of young American graduates who are found particularly in Prague where they have cornered a market in teaching English. There are estimated to be between 20,000 and 40,000 of them in the Czech Republic (although the American Embassy estimates only 12,000), mostly working illegally, but enough to encourage a whole range of ethnic businesses to serve the community including several newspapers, laundries, book shops and bars. These do not obey the usual rules of migration since they come for a rich country, not a poor one, they often bring remittances with them rather than sending them back home and they are highly educated (mostly middle class college graduates) rather than manual workers. This phenomenon is related to tourism since it represents a form of hedonistic adventurous migration. There are however enough young Americans to form a distinctive ethnic enclave. Adventuristic migrants come from other parts of the world too, and a number of our respondents from Eastern Europe described how they wanted to travel and to see the world: the buffer zone forms a pole of attraction for these young people since it is still relatively cheap and offers a stepping stone for visiting other parts of Europe.

One factor in the creation of foreign workforce has been the creation of ethnic niches in the labour market. Building and construction is one very conspicuous area where Ukrainians work, for example, and these are recruited along ethnic lines, thus reinforcing the tendency. As some of our interviewees explained:

> You probably know that a lot of Ukrainians from Western Ukraine go abroad for seasonal work. A friend of mine came and used to work as a builder in Prague. He suggested I come with him.

> A lot of my friends used to come to Prague as workers. They would buy a tourist voucher, come here and find a job. There is a great demand for manual workers here. I was told that it was possible to earn good money.

These ethnic groups then keep some control over access to labour market niches so that it is even difficult for workers from other parts of Ukraine to penetrate those sectors of the labour market. As one explained:

> I come from Kiev and most of manual workers in Prague are from the Trans-Carpathian region (Western Ukraine). They have taken all the jobs. You can meet them everywhere (this was spoken in a tone of great fury).

Migrant workers from the former-Yugoslavia were often more educated and had to accept jobs which were below their educational level in order to survive. This may be one reason why people from the former-Yugoslavia had a propensity to start their own businesses as they were longer term residents and their incomes could be higher in this way.

Although some respondents migrated individually, work gangs are often organized back in the country of origin where workers are promised all kinds of wonderful rewards. When they arrive, if they are lucky their work permits may have been organized for them as promised. However, if they are unlucky they may find themselves marooned in a foreign country on a very low wage and without any legal documents. If they leave this employment, they must find somewhere else to work illegally. Some of these work gangs work for western companies, who have moved some of their production to the buffer zone where the work is in turn sub-contracted out to the Ukrainian work gangs by Czech sub-contractors. It is our impression that whilst some of this work may be legally and legitimately organized, the majority of it is not. This creates a role for intermediaries and agents who take a cut of up to 50 per cent from the migrant workers wages as well as often asking for money in advance as a fee and the repayment of the transportation costs. The migrant worker, already on a low wage can find themselves with very little money remaining. This merges into more criminal styles of organization as ethnic mafias start to control labour migration and extort money from the migrants (one of our respondents chose to move jobs frequently in order to stay ahead of the Ukrainian mafia who would have extorted money from him). Migrant workers are further prey to ethnic mafias who demand money from them on the journey to and from their homelands, although these may also be merely hucksters and con-artists as opposed to organized criminal gangs The indigenous organized criminal gangs may also extort money from migrants once they have returned to their homeland, so the hapless migrant labourer may lose nearly all the money they earned if they are unlucky.

Other intermediaries operate within the buffer zone countries to organize documents or find jobs and housing for migrant workers. Some of the street markets also operate as informal job exchanges where information about vacancies or housing can be sought.

Women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in this respect, especially since their wages are even lower than a man's. We found that women were earning sometimes only 1,000 – 2,000 crown per month in the Czech Republic (about $35 – $70 – about one sixth to one third of the average Czech salary) which is below the level of minimum subsistence. Indeed about half of the illegal women migrants mentioned part-time, full-time or temporary prostitution as part of their migrant careers. They may find themselves coerced into prostitution by intermediaries who confiscate their documents or they may resort to prostitution when they find themselves without other means of sustenance. In one case we found that woman workers sub-contracted to a western firm by intermediaries had wages which were so low they had difficulty paying for their lodgings. Men from the local town would offer to pay the rent and the women complained that they had to work two shifts: one at night and one during the day. If they did not like this system they could try to find jobs and accommodation for themselves on the illegal labour market without official documents. Sexual favours must sometimes be offered by the illegal woman worker who wants a job or a place to live. NGOs who help to rescue women who find themselves in forced prostitution as far away as Switzerland or the Netherlands report that they are increasingly being approached by women from Eastern Europe.

Thus ethnic, social and gender divisions are produced as a result of this migration and the changes in the labour markets of the buffer zone. The creation of different relations between ethnic groups is to some extent a product of the positions which they occupy in the labour market and the skills which they bring with them.

Trading

Whilst most accounts of economic migration focus upon labour migration our research has indicated a number of other types of mobility. In particular trading has taken on a new significance in response to changing consumer demands, different patterns of economic development and the effect of international sanctions imposed upon the former-Yugoslavia. The economic situation in the buffer zone, including the other types of mobility listed here creates a range of opportunities for intermediaries, traders and entrepreneurs. These can be both legal or illegal and many are able to take advantage of the ambiguous legal situation and flourishing informal economy existing in the buffer regions. Some of this takes criminal forms. The Central European buffer zone then becomes the region from which small scale 'suitcase' trading can take place across frontiers but also the region from which international networks of trading between Eastern Europe, the Far East, the Middle East and the wealthy EU countries can be organized. Thus in Poland there are estimated to be 550,000 suitcase traders arriving each month and in Bulgaria there are between 800,000 and 500,000 (IOM 1994b, 1994c). The rewards from this trading are far higher than from labour migration. The ethnicization of these trading relations is one important feature which makes such long range communication possible in countries where telecommunications infrastructure and travel facilities are below average.

How did this come about? The Soviet and post-Soviet economy created a situation whereby there was a constant shortage of consumer goods but a high consumer demand so that importing goods and trading them was one way in which to meet this demand. Goods were often sold at below their market price which means that they could be profitably re-sold further west in the buffer zone of Central Europe where their value was higher and then even resold again by buffer zone citizens who were able to travel further west. Initial capital could be obtained from savings which were quite extensive in many countries where there were few consumer goods upon which to spend money. The constant shortages in the communist economy but high consumer demand meant that there was a hungry market for consumer goods. Even second hand goods and second hand clothes and cars are saleable back East or in the buffer zone. Cars transported back to the East by traders, migrants and tourists are especially successful ventures: some travelers finance their trip to the West by buying a car and driving it back.

Widespread street trading is a phenomenon of all post-communist countries where lines of people wait trying to sell almost anything from cigarettes to light bulbs, from cosmetics to kittens at every convenient (and often inconvenient) spot. Some of these street stalls later became little kiosks and some of these were in turn later developed into proper shops. This evolution can be seen quite clearly in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary as the street traders moved indoors and became conventional small businessmen. However, street trading by migrants has a distinctive character because it takes advantages of the opportunities for mobility.

Cross border trading between Western and Eastern Europe was already an established practice by the 1980s before the regime change. Those few people such as sailors and employees of international tourist organizations who could go abroad would bring back goods to retail through a network of informal channels and Polish traders made regular trips to Berlin in order to sell goods returning with videos and other consumer goods. However, since the regime transformations this has escalated on a massive scale. Citizens of the buffer zone countries, being able to travel freely can buy goods which are in short supply and bring them home for re-selling. Cars were a particularly important commodity. The streets of most post-communist countries are thick with imported second hand cars from Western Europe.

Cross-border trading after the regime change, with the liberalization of travel and with the new demand for consumer goods, took place in a number of waves. The first wave involved people from the former Soviet Union, mainly Russia, Blears and Ukraine selling electrical goods, cameras, vodka and food in Poland. There are an estimated 250,000 of these traders in Poland in any one day and they normally sell their products, convert the zlotys into dollars then take the dollars back home. Every Polish town has its 'Russian market' and many of the railway stations are full of sleeping traders camped around their blue, white and red striped bags on small hand trolleys.

The second wave derives from the former Yugoslavia and extended through Hungary and the Czech and Slovak republics and began in 1989-1990. This involved individual traveling with items of high value being taken abroad: car parts, parts for agricultural machinery, gold, antiques and so on.

The third wave involved traders from much further afield: Turkey, China, Vietnam and the middle East. These developed organized methods of border crossing and more systematic networks for wholesaling and brokering. This trade was unintentionally supported by the official and semi-official 'tourist' agencies which started to flourish in the former Soviet Union [(6)].

The introduction of visas in the buffer zone countries for some of the countries of the former Yugoslavia as a response to the wave of war refugees changed the character of their trading as they were no longer able to travel back and forth so easily. However, citizens of the former USSR can still travel to and fro fairly easily, although more and more visas are being introduced for them as well.

Although traders are supposed to have a license, in facto only 13 of the 51 traders in our sample in the Czech Republic were working legally. Many of the migrants who arrived for other reasons (for example to take a job or to escape from war zones) took up trading as an addition activity or simply in order to support themselves. Different ethnic groups specialize in particular trades and here we give just two examples: Vietnamese and former Yugoslavians.

Vietnamese Traders [subtitle status C]: Vietnamese workers came to Central Europe countries during the 1970s as a recruitment policy whereby Vietnam paid for the participation of their 'socialist brothers' in the Vietnam war and fed the factories in parts of Communist Central Europe which were short of labour. In the Czech Republic there were 37,000 Vietnamese workers in 1989 but in 1992 and 1993 their contracts were terminated and they were sent home. Many of them tried to go West or to find some other livelihood in the Czech Republic. However, at this stage the moved from being workers to traders. A treaty concluded between the Czech government and that of Vietnam in 1994 attempted to regulate this movement and allows for an increased quota of 3,000 Vietnamese per year. Vietnamese traders can now be found on any street corner in the buffer zone, selling mainly clothes but sometimes also electrical goods and shoes.

Being a very closed community it was difficult for us to obtain any interviews with Vietnamese traders who were reluctant to talk to outsiders. However, from our few interviews, we found that they arrive often at first through contact with a worker in a factory who is legitimately employed and others arrive through family and ethnic networks.

The rewards from street trading are far higher than from regular work. One Vietnamese respondent claimed to earn $500 - $900 per month against the average Czech salary of $200.

Former-Yugoslavians [subtitle status C]: Before the visa regime was introduced they came mainly as tourists but afterwards they needed a letter of invitation from a compatriot who was already resident. The very large number of people from this region who are exiles means that there are a significant population of these people in the buffer zone countries. However, very few of them file formal applications as asylum seekers. They prefer to find jobs or to carry out street trading.

Many of these migrants are young people with Higher Education and able to speak several languages. In the Czech Republic work in the new service industries, with which they were already familiar in the former-Yugoslavia before the economy collapsed following break-out of hostilities. They work in video and computer firms, they work in tourist agencies or as translators. Some also worked as waiters and cooks in the new bars and restaurants. Although they all complained of being downwardly mobile in comparison to their earlier jobs in the former-Yugoslavia, they were nevertheless earning roughly twice as much as the Czech average wage.

There are therefore distinctive ethnic enclaves emerging amongst the traders with particular groups taking over particular sectors and spots for trading. In many cases the form of trading undertaken depends upon ethnic links with the home country or throughout the world.

None of these categories of migrants listed above are discrete; there is considerable overlap between them and the same person could appear in several categories. Tourism, for example is often a cover for trading or casual work. Refugees make a living through casual work and small businesses and so on. Moreover, the situation is very new and changing rapidly which means that none of the above groups are stable ones and none could be said to form stable ethnic communities. Perhaps because of this very new situation most respondents did not know what they want to do next or where they want to go. They see their situation as a temporary one, but one in which they must earn a living and make friends or start families somehow. Many still had strong links with the home community which they could use in their activities. For this reason it is better to talk of mobility rather than migration. However, such activities have implications for emerging ethnic and social structures in the region within which the various migrant groups form a part.

Migration and social structure

The dynamically changing economies of the buffer zone create new opportunities for geographical mobility but these also have implications for social mobility. New social classes are being created and those who were once wealthy find themselves poor, whilst millionaire appear almost from nowhere. The new market dynamics have created opportunities for different ethnic niches in the labour market and business communities. In some cases these are entirely new, having developed only over the last few years. The Chinese community is new in this sense: as

one Czech minister said on the radio, until 1992 he had never seen a Chinese person and now there are thousands of them resident. In Hungary, by contrast, Chinese migrants arrived from the late 1980s and by 1991 they numbered 30-40,000 (Nyiri 1995). Now traders and "business men" from Belarus, Ukraine and the Balkans are not uncommon sights.

However, ethnic groups establish roots in communities with which they have already some cultural or historical affinity (Granovetter 1995). For this reason former-Yugoslavs may see their destination as Germany, Hungary or the Czech Republic; Armenians as the USA. Ethnic Hungarian Romanians are most likely to migrate to Hungary; there were none in the Czech Republic or Poland. Belarusians and Ukrainians are often likely to go to Poland where they may have relatives over several generations. Silesians may go to Germany for the same reasons, or Slovaks to the Czech Republic. Many of the ethnic colonies are therefore building upon existing ties and communities. Once established, we are finding evidence that ethnic networks start to monopolize areas of work or business and may operate in an exclusionary manner

Fear of crime which is one of the major reasons why the host societies resent the presence of foreigners. The rising crime wave which has accompanied transformation from Communism is often blamed upon foreigners. For example reports of crime in newspapers in Poland and the Czech Republic usually mention the ethnic backgrounds of criminals and migrants are referred to usually in relation to crimes they are carrying out or in terms of their infringement of border and visa regulations (IOM 1994a, 1994b). This helps contribute to a general atmosphere of fear and suspicion of migrants. Whereas the buffer zone countries at first welcomed migrants, feeling flattered that they would want to come to their country, or respondents in all countries report increasing incidents of harassment and abuse. Attitudes towards foreigners have hardened and start to resemble those in neighbouring Austria and Germany. For example, surveys conducted by Csepeli and Sik (1995) in Hungary found rising intolerance towards foreigners between 1992 and 1995.

These new market relations also have implications for other aspects of social structure. Some ethnic groups are represented mainly by poor and unskilled migrants – Bulgarians, Romanians and Ukrainians are examples. However, others may include people with above average education and resources. For these people there may be some initial downward mobility as they establish their position in the labour market but upward mobility as they consolidate their position. For example a survey comprising 86 in-depth interviews in Poland and 190 in the Czech Republic found that 34 per cent of respondents in Poland were from higher strata and 20 per cent from middle strata. In the Czech Republic, 15 per cent had Higher Education plus substantial personal assets and an additional 42 per cent had Higher Education without additional assets (IOM 1994a, 1994b). Although these were not representative samples and not too much can be inferred from these figures, the very heavy skew towards higher status backgrounds may indicate that these were over-represented among migrants, particularly those from very far afield. The huge cost of coming to the buffer zone from far flung countries such as China or Arab States and starting a business means that the migrant must have considerable

resources already and are not from the lowest social strata in their countries. Businesses themselves are far more lucrative than living from wages and since many of these groups are business people their incomes may well be much higher than the average citizen of the buffer zone. The conspicuous wealth which some of these ethnic communities are able to accrue as a result can also be a source of resentment in buffer zone countries where wages are very low. Granovetter (1995) and others have described the way in which ethnic communities can help or hinder business activities in many different societies. However, what is different about the situation described here is that new ethnic entrepreneurship takes place in on new territory, with few pre-established business interests – new business and market activity is introduced to these societies and here foriegners have a more open access than they would in more stable and solidified societies.

The increase in hostility against foreigners has been a feature of buffer zone countries just as in Western European countries. Skinheads, racially motivated attacks and casual racism are features of transitional societies just as much as Western ones. The general rise in xenophobia and racially motivated crimes can be traced all over Europe in the last ten years and Vietnamese respondents in particular reported to us that such attacks were relatively frequent although they did not report them to the police as they preferred to keep a low profile in the host society. Romanies have likewise been conspicuous victims of such attacks. In some cases these new migrants revive the ghosts of old hostilities as is the case with Roma, who have suffered persecution throughout history in the region, or Germans in Poland and the Czech Republic or Hungarians in Slovakia. Anti-semitic propoganda has re-emerged in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia where jews are blamed for their "cosmopolitan" influence.

The relations between genders are most stark in the highly sexually exploitative industries such as prostitution. However, it is evident that many of the jobs being created demand labour not only for male manual workers (as was the case in earlier periods of migration) but also from dexterous women who can work in light industries or service industries. Thus, although the majority of migrants were still male, the pattern of migration was more mixed than has been the case with the traditional guest worker system which existed previously in Western Europe (where women came mostly as spouses of guest workers). The migration of male workers also depends upon the sexual division of labour in the home community as a study by Sidorenko (1995) indicates. Women migrants who were married to locals worked also as mediators helping to find jobs, accommodation and work permits for their in-coming co-nationals.

Finally, one feature which these new waves of migration have in common with previous migrations is that these are predominantly young people. This has implications for the demographic structure of the sending countries (Albania for example, has almost lost its entire younger generation as young people have gone to work in Greece or Italy) but also for those of the receiving countries. However, what seems unusual in this migration is that many migrants have above average education (IOM 1994a, 1994b). Here we are seeing young, middle class migration.

We have speculated about the effect that migration could have in terms of creating communities of foreigners in the buffer zone countries with particular social and economic characteristics. However, the situation is still very new and in a state of flux which means that established ethnic communities have not yet coalesced. It will be interesting to see which of these patterns continue in the future.

Conclusions

We have documented some of the features of the rapid growth and acceleration in mobility around the region and speculated on some of its implications. Movement of people from East to West has been a feature of Europe for some centuries and it could be argued that only the situation introduced by the Cold War over the last forty years has halted this temporarily; now it continues once more (Munz and Fassman 1995). However, there are features of contemporary society which are distinctive and which did not exist in the past. The speed and choice of modern communications make it possible for people to travel large distances relatively quickly and easily. They can also return or commute over those distances and this means that some migrants maintain active networks over distance rather than leaving their friends and relatives behind. Furthermore, it is no longer necessary for them to settle (current citizenship regulations in the buffer zone and neighbouring countries actually discourages them from doing this). Instead they can come as temporary residents with the idea of moving on or going home when they are able to or would like to. Modern communications therefore make possible the temporariness of migration and the possibilities of communication and trading are enhanced. It is travel as a whole rather than migration per se which is on the increase. Perhaps for this reason, there has been no large-scale inundation by Easterners as was originally feared, either from the buffer zone into Western Europe or from the former Soviet Union into the buffer zone. The numbers of migrants are relatively few but there is much movement to and fro for trade, temporary work and curiosity. In countries where travel was a very priviliged favour, the experience of travel can be an end in itself.

Another feature of contemporary society is that it embodies a well developed consumer culture which has rapidly caught hold in the buffer zone and further east. The motivation for mobility is therefore often to share this glittering world of consumer goods and consumer life-styles. Places themselves become aspects of consumption. Thus, it is fashionable to go to Prague for New Year for example. Many people want only to "see" Paris. For migrants from the East the buffer zone or the Western neighbors of the buffer zone represent the consumer haven which they would either like to attain or which they just come to gawk at. A few years ago the shop windows alone drew crowds of consumer-hungry spectators. They have seen it on their TV screens and now they want to see it for real. Westerners, in their turn come to gawk at the previously forbidden world behind the Iron Curtain. However, the buffer zone countries represent safer and more attractive destinations for such experiences. Such places offer adventure, but not too risky adventure and as such are attractions for large numbers of

relatively affluent young people and other tourists. The circulation of goods and people is also a circulation of life-styles, aspirations and experiences.

Developments at the new frontiers of Europe have lead us to question some of the implications of the term 'migration' in our research since this implies people moving from one fixed point to another fixed point with a set purpose in mind and with some final intention. Many of our respondents were not sure about what would be outcome of their movements and much of the mobility around the region is rather indeterminate or circular. It is evident that people are mobile within and between regions for a variety of reasons and their mobility may be long term (in the case of those wanting to settle somewhere else), temporary (in the case of refugees waiting to go home or contract workers) or very short term (in the case of suit case traders who may only stay for a day or two). Furthermore there are a variety of motivations and factors involved. Therefore we have focused instead upon mobility within the region generally and the factors which affect it rather than immigration or emigration (Morokvasic, Angenendt and Fischer 1994). It is more helpful perhaps to think in terms of circuits of mobility with different groups moving around with different purposes and with different speeds – on different circuits. Such circuits are associated with ethnicity, social and economic characteristics of the respondents and this is why we have described such features in this article.

The buffer zone therefore both attracts and exports migrants who arrive for different reasons and on different socio-economic levels. It would be too simple to say that this is simply East-West migration, which is the phenomenon which people have tended to look at mostly in the past. Rather, we need to disaggregate different groups and different patterns of mobility.

The circulation of migrants around the area of the buffer zone creates new kinds of economic and social relations – what we might term 'economic and cultural communication' since this can take many forms. This has implications for the host as well as the sending communists. These forms of circulation have together transformed the character of the buffer zone countries and created cultural and consumer links between them and European Union countries.

This article is only a preliminary attempt to sketch some of the elements of regional change and the role which mobility/migration plays in this transformation. Many of the insights came from talking to migrants and living and working in the buffer zone for some years. What is needed is further documentation and evidence which we hope to be able to carry out in future.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the International Organization for Migration, the Central European University and the Austrian National Bank for sponsoring the research. We also owe a special debt also to Andrii Palyanitsya who was an earlier collaborator on the project and of course to all our students who skillfully collected the data. A German version of this article was published in SWS Rundschau 1995 Heft 1

Notes

1 Although there is no EU policy on migration, groups of countries within the EU have developed their own regulations. Thus the Schengen Group consisting of Germany, France and the Benelux countries agreed to allow unrestricted movement within their borders but have some common control of external borders. In 1990 the Dublin Convention set up a joint policy on refugees and asylum seekers. In 1990 the Schengen group, which by this time had been expanded, signed an agreement on the treatment of third country nationals. However, it has not been possible to implement the Schengen Accords, partly because of the continually uncertain situation in Eastern Europe. Now these will finally be implemented in March 1995. Since 1991 the Convention for Security and Co-operation in Europe have been attempting to create a zone which included the buffer zone countries within which there were be relatively free travel but which restricted the treatment of third country nationals. A range of other agreements and accords and meetings have also taken place in an attempt to regulate this issue in a co-ordinated way.

2 Germany has signed bi-lateral agreements with its Eastern neighbours which means that illegal migrants caught within a given period of time can be returned to the country through which they transited legally. Now the Czech Republic and Poland have signed similar agreements with their own neighbours further East.

3 Refugee centres are usually located in ex-Soviet Army barracks and offer free subsistence and medical help along with a very small daily allowance. This aid is provided by the government of the buffer zone country from its own revenues. Most refugees were not in such centres since the opportunity to lead a more normal, non-institutional life and earn money was much better outside of them. It was our impression that only the most helpless refugees went to such centres.

4 There has been a explosion in prostitution throughout Europe partly as a consequence of the increased supply of women from former-communist countries. These offer services not just in their own countries – and this is particularly evident in buffer zone countries which are accessible on a day trip from Western Europe – but also in Western European countries as well. The trafficking in women has become a major form of cross border trading.

5 In September 1995 we carried out anthropological field work in Odessa, a southern city of the Ukraine. One of the aims of the project was to find out how cross-border trading worked. Goods were no longer produced in Ukraine. Instead, they were imported from Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia and Turkey and even from the United Arab Emirates. The main way in which they were imported was through individual journeys by traders who brought back wares (mostly western consumer goods or facsimiles of them) and sold them on the many open markets. They were then bought and resold in other part of Ukraine, Moldova and Russia.

6 The proliferation of travel agencies in the former Soviet Union offer help with getting a passport, visa and transportation. Newspaper and TV advertisements even give details of what can be bought in these other countries (for example second hand cars which can be driven back from Belgium and Germany).

References

Berencsi, Z. and Sik, E. (1995) 'Intentions to Migrate and Work Abroad in Hungary 1993-4' in M. Fullerton, E. Sik and J. Toth (Eds.), *Refugees and Migrants: Hungary at the Crossroads*, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Toth Carter, F.W., French, R.A. and Salt, J. (1993) 'International Migration Between East and West Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16(3): 467- 491

Csepeli, G. and Sik, E. (1995) 'The Changing Content of Politial Xenophobia in Hungary: is the growth of xenophobia inevitable?' in M. Fullerton, E.Sik and J. Toth (Eds.), *Refugees and Migrants: Hungary at the Crossroads*, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Fischer, A. (1994) 'Temporary Labour Migration from Central and East Europe: the case of Germany' in S. Ringen and C. Wallace (Eds.), *Societies in Transition: East-Central Europe Today*, Avebury: Aldershot

Granovetter, M. (1995) The Economic Sociology of Firms and Entrepreneurs in A.Portes (Ed.), *The Economic Sociology of Immigration,* New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Haerpfer, C. and Zeilhofer, H. (1995) 'Household Portfolios of Micro-Economic Behaviour in Post-Communist Societies: A Seven Nation Study' in ESOMAR (Ed.), *Towards a Market Society: Beyond the Point of No Return,* ESOMAR: Amsterdam

Horakova, M. (1993) Pilot Study on the Short-Term Labour Migration from the Czech Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany, unpublished manuscript, Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research

Heinrich, H-G (1994) *Migration in Russia,* unpublished report, University of Vienna

International Organization for Migration (1994a) *Transit Migration in the Czech Republic,* Geneva: IOM

International Organization for Migration (1994b) *Transit Migration in Poland,* Geneva: IOM

International Organization for Migration (1994c) *Transit Migration in Bulgaria*, Geneva: IOM

International Organization for Migration (1994d) *Transit Migration in Ukraine*, Geneva: IOM

Kussbach, E. (1992) 'European Challenge: East-West Migration', *International Migration Review* Vol xxvi (2): 646-67

Migration News, January 1995 (internet transmission)

Morokvasic, M., Angenendt, S. and Fischer, A. (1994) 'East-West Migrations and their place in Political and Strategic Debate in France and Germany', *Revue D'Etudes Comparatives Est-Ouest* 3: 135-160

Münz, R. and Fassmann, H. (1995) 'European East-West Migration' in R. Cohen, R. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Survey of Migration,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Nagy, B. (1995) 'Changing Trends,Enduring Questions Regarding Refugee Law in Central Europe' in M. Fullerton, E. Sik and J. Toth (Eds.), *Refugees and Migrants: Hungary at the Crossroads,* Institute of Political Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Niessen, J. (1992) 'European Community Legislation and Inter-Governmental Co-Operation on Migration', *International Migration Review* Vol xxvi (2): 676-84

Nyiri, P.D. (1995) 'From Settlement to Community (Five Years of the Chinese in Hungary)' in M. Fullerton, E. Sik and J. Toth (Eds.), *Refugees and Migrants: Hungary at theCrossroads*, Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest

Roberts, K., Jung, B and associates (1995) *Poland's First Post-Communist Generation*, Gower: Avebury

Rose, R. and Hearpfer, C. (1992) *New Democracies Between State and Market,* Studies in Public Policy No. 204, University of Strathclyde

Salt, J. (1992) 'Migration Processes among the Highly Skilled in Europe', *International Migration Review* Vol xxvi (2): 484-505

Sassen, S. (1988) *The Mobility of Labour and Capital*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Sassen, S. (1995) 'Immigration and Local Labour Markets' in A.Portes (Ed.), *The Sociology of Immigration,* New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Sidorenko, E. (1995) 'Gender, Migration and the Formation of Ethnic Niches in the Labour Market: the case of Ukrainian workers in the Czech Republic', unpublished manuscript, Central European University, Prague

Sik, E. (1993) 'From the Second Economy to the Informal Economy', *Journal of Public Policy* 12(2): 153-175

Sipko, D. (1993) 'Reconceptualising Refugees', unpublished paper for the Graduate School of Social Research, Warsaw

Stalker, P. (1994) *The Work of Strangers,* Geneva: International Labour Organization

Urry, J. (1990) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society,* London: Sage

Verhaeren, R-E (1993) 'Future Trends in International Migration in Europe', *International Migration Review* 27: 630-638

Wallace, C. and Palyanitsya, A. (1995) 'East-West Migratoin in the Czech Republic', *Journal of Public Policy*

Wallace, C. (1995) Citizenship and Social Policy in East-Central Europe in K. Nielson and M. Mendell (forthcoming) Europe Central and East. Black Rose Books: Macbeth New York.

Wedel, J. (1992) *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism,* New York: Columbia University Press

Institut für Höhere Studien
Institute for Advanced Studies
Stumpergasse 56
A-1060 Vienna
Austria

Phone: +43-1-599 91-216
Fax: +43-1-599 91-191